



## Appendix B: Clinical Features of Dementia, Delirium and Depression

Feature	Dementia	Delirium	Depression
Onset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insidious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acute</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradual; may coincide with life changes</li> </ul>
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Months to years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hours to less than one month, seldom longer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least two weeks, but can be several months to years</li> </ul>
Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable and progressive; Vascular dementia: usually stepwise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluctuates: worse at night</li> <li>• Lucid periods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diurnal: usually worse in mornings, improves as day goes on</li> </ul>
Alertness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally normal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluctuates: lethargic or hyper-vigilant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal</li> </ul>
Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be normal but often impaired for time/later in the disease, place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always impaired: time/place/person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually normal</li> </ul>
Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impaired recent and sometimes remote memory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global memory failure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent memory may be impaired</li> <li>• Long-term memory intact</li> </ul>
Thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slowed: reduced interests</li> <li>• Makes poor judgements</li> <li>• Words difficult to find</li> <li>• Perseverates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disorganized, distorted, fragmented</li> <li>• Bizarre ideas and topics such as paranoid grandiose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually slowed, preoccupied by sad and hopeless thoughts; somatic preoccupation</li> <li>• Mood congruent delusions</li> </ul>
Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal</li> <li>• Hallucinations (often visual)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distorted: visual and auditory</li> <li>• Hallucinations common</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intact</li> <li>• Hallucinations absent except in psychotic depression</li> </ul>
Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shallow, apathetic, labile</li> <li>• Irritable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irritable, aggressive, fearful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flat, unresponsive or sad and fearful</li> <li>• May be irritable</li> </ul>
Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often disturbed, nocturnal, wandering common</li> <li>• Nocturnal confusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nocturnal confusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early morning waking</li> </ul>
Other features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor insight into deficits</li> <li>• Careless</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other physical disease may not be obvious</li> <li>• Inattentive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past history of mood disorder</li> <li>• Poor effort on cognitive testing: gives up easily</li> </ul>
Standard Tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive assessment (history, physical, lab, Standardized Mini-Mental State Exam)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See <i>Appendix C: Delirium Screening and Assessment Tools - CAM &amp; PRISME</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See <i>Appendix D: Depression Screening Tools</i></li> </ul>

**Reference** (adapted from): Centre for Health Informatics and Multiprofessional Education, University College London. Dementia tutorial: Diagnosis and management in primary care: A primary care based education/research project. Available from: [www.ehr.chime.ucl.ac.uk](http://www.ehr.chime.ucl.ac.uk)